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Mohammed Dahlan resigns following Fatah's Gaza defeat

By Avi Issacharoff, Haaretz Correspondent, and The Associated Press

Former Gaza strongman Mohammed Dahlan resigned as Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' national security adviser Thursday, a month and a half after his men were routed in the Gaza Strip by their rivals from Hamas.

In a statement sent to reporters, Dahlan cited health reasons, but Palestinian Authority sources said he had been asked to resign by a government committee that concluded that he bore much of the responsibility for Fatah's humiliating defeat by Hamas in mid-June.

The committee is expected to publish its report on Friday. Dozens of Fatah security officials may be dismissed after the report is made public, Fatah spokesman Fahmi al-Zaarir said.

The committee, appointed by Abbas, recommended Thursday that 60 members of the Palestinian security forces face trial for their poor performance in Gaza, an official in Abbas' office said.

"Because of my long absence and health problems, I hope that you accept the end of my mission as a national security adviser. I will always remain a loyal soldier behind you," Dahlan wrote to Abbas, according to the statement.

Dahlan was widely blamed for Fatah's surprising collapse in five days of fighting in Gaza. Abbas has already dismissed more than a dozen other Fatah officials tarnished by the defeat.

After the Hamas victory, Dahlan justified his men's poor performance by saying they were exhausted and destroyed following years of Israeli-Palestinian violence. But many Fatah loyalists said they felt betrayed by Dahlan, who was often abroad for medical treatment, for not personally leading the battle against Hamas.

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